

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A method for generating a list of common contacts, comprising the steps of:

first retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed, remotely accessible contact list;

first comparing said first retrieved contacts to stored contacts in a locally accessible contact list;

first identifying common contacts among said first compared contacts;

second retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed, remotely accessible contact list associated with one of said first retrieved contacts;

second comparing said second retrieved contacts to said locally stored contacts;

second identifying common contacts among said second compared contacts; and,

storing said identified common contacts in a list of common contacts.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of repeating said second retrieving, second comparing and second identifying steps for each first retrieved contact not identified as a common contact in said first identifying step.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein said second retrieving step comprises the step of second retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed, remotely accessible contact list associated with one of said first retrieved contacts not identified as a common contact in said first identifying step.

4. A method generating a list of common contacts, comprising the steps of:
 exchanging contact lists over a physical communications link;
 comparing contacts in said exchanged contact lists to identify matching contacts;
 and,
 storing said matched contacts in a common contact list.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said exchanging step comprises the steps of:
 establishing a wireless communications link; and,
 exchanging said contact lists over said established wireless communications link.

6. A method of generating a list of common contacts, comprising the steps of:
 accessing a contact list in a remotely accessible database of contacts;
 comparing contacts in said contact list with contacts in a stored database of
 contacts, said comparison producing matching contacts; and,
 providing a visual hyperlink for each matching contact produced by said
 comparing step.

7. A common contact identification system comprising:
 at least two contact lists, each said contact list comprising a plurality of contacts,
 each said contact list having a publicly accessible interface through which said contacts
 can be accessed remotely;

11 a comparator for comparing contacts in each of said at least two contact lists,
12 said comparator identifying matching contacts in each of said at least two contact lists;
13 and,
14 a common contact list comprising contacts matched by said comparator.

1 8. The system of claim 7, wherein each said contact list is stored in a storage
2 medium selected from the group consisting of a database, a contact management
3 program data store, an e-mail program address book, an instant messenger address
4 book, a cellular phone address book and a personal digital assistant address book.

1 9. The system of claim 7, further comprising a communications link between said
2 contact lists over which said contacts in said contact lists can be transmitted.

1 10. The system of claim 9, wherein said communications link is selected from the
2 group consisting of an infrared communications link, a short range radio frequency
3 communications link, and a TCP/IP wireline link.

1 11. The system of claim 7, wherein said common contact list comprises at least one
2 hyperlinked address of a matched contact.

1 12. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for
2 generating a list of common contacts, said machine readable storage having a plurality
3 of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform a series
4 of steps, said steps comprising:

5 first retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed, remotely accessible
6 contact list;

7 first comparing said first retrieved contacts to stored contacts in a locally
8 accessible contact list;

9 first identifying common contacts among said first compared contacts;
10 second retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed, remotely accessible
11 contact list associated with one of said first retrieved contacts;

12 second comparing said second retrieved contacts to said locally stored contacts;

13 second identifying common contacts among said second compared contacts;

14 and,

15 storing said identified common contacts in a list of common contacts.

1 13. The machine readable storage of claim 12, further comprising the step of
2 repeating said second retrieving, second comparing and second identifying steps for
3 each first retrieved contact not identified as a common contact in said first identifying
4 step.

1 14. The machine readable storage of claim 12, wherein said second retrieving step
2 comprises the step of second retrieving a plurality of contacts from an exposed,
3 remotely accessible contact list associated with one of said first retrieved contacts not
4 identified as a common contact in said first identifying step.

1 15. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for
2 generating a list of common contacts, said machine readable storage having a plurality
3 of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform a series
4 of steps, said steps comprising:

5 exchanging contact lists over a physical communications link;
6 comparing contacts in said exchanged contact lists to identify matching contacts;
7 and,
8 storing said matched contacts in a common contact list.

1 16. The machine readable storage of claim 15, wherein said exchanging step
2 comprises the steps of:
3 establishing a wireless communications link; and,
4 exchanging said contact lists over said established wireless communications link.

1 17. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for
2 generating a list of common contacts, said machine readable storage having a plurality
3 of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform a series
4 of steps, said steps comprising:

5 accessing a contact list in a remotely accessible database of contacts;

6 comparing contacts in said contact list with contacts in a stored database of
7 contacts, said comparison producing matching contacts; and,

8 providing a visual hyperlink for each matching contact produced by said
9 comparing step.